



NEWSLETTER

June 2016

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GOOD GOVERNMENT  
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*Founded February 2009*

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## **GGG Honors CG Fire Chief, Marc Stolzenberg**



In the ballroom-like setting of the grand lobby of the AmTrust Bank of Coral Gables, GGG was pleased to be able to honor Fire Chief Marc Stolzenberg on June 8, 2016. Special thanks go to D o b r y

Perdomo, Assistant VP-Branch Manager and German Alfaro, Branch Manager, for their hospitality and for providing this dramatic venue.

After 33 years of serving the citizens of Coral Gables, Fire Chief, Mark Stolzenberg will be stepping down effective November 1, 2016. However, he can look back with pride on his accomplishments which will be a challenge for any subsequent Chief to match.

On becoming Fire Chief, April 1, 2013, he became responsible for more than 130 firefighters and medical first responders. This responsibility came at the culmination of a career which began with Stolzenberg attaining a BS degree from the University of Cincinnati followed by a Master of Science Management from Southwestern College. He is also a graduate of the Executive Fire Officer Program from the National Fire Academy.

During his tenure as EMS Captain, Stolzenberg led the Fire Department's first

efforts to achieve accreditation by the Commission of Fire Accreditation International in 1998. The department is only 1 of 19 in the country which holds both Class 1 rating and Fire Accreditation and only 1 of 7 departments in Florida. Most recently, he helped implement a new, state-of-the-art emergency dispatch system known as *Locution*, which has reduced response times.

Additional involvement in fire safety has placed Chief Stolzenberg on the Board of Directors for the Fire Officers Association of Miami-Dade County which establishes best practices and addresses issues pertaining to firefighter operations, emergency management and homeland security for South Florida. He is also the Emergency Management coordinator for the City of Coral Gables and has helped to enhance the City's Rescue Recon teams and emergency response.



**Fire Chief Stolzenberg receives plaque of honor from GGG President Debbie Swain**

**Gables Good Government Committee was organized to support issues and causes that preserve and improve the quality of life in Coral Gables and promote the effective and efficient management of its government.**

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# GGG Letter to the Editor of *The Miami Herald*:

Re: the May 20 article, *City's critics demand urgency to fill vacant police force positions*:

**May 31, 2016:** The article regarding sworn officer shortages within the Coral Gables Police Department expressed many of the concerns that Coral Gables residents have with the slow and seemingly inadequate process being utilized to recruit and hire the police officers. The Gables Good Government Committee (GGG), a non-partisan organization that focuses on quality-of-life issues in Coral Gables, sent a letter to its city manager on April 29, 2016, stating, " We urge you to take whatever action is necessary to fill these vacancies as soon as possible so that our City's residents are provided the superior quality of public safety for which our community has historically been known."

The negative impact of short-staffing raises red flags: (1) Patrol officers have been asked to work extremely long overtime days, causing fatigue; (2) The department exceeded its yearly overtime budget in May and now must draw overtime pay from new-hire funds; (3) The need to maintain minimum patrol staffing means that motor units, detectives, youth services, bike patrol and marine patrol are understaffed; and (4) Part-time officers may need to be hired for traffic enforcement.

These red flags could be lowered with a one-time, extraordinary effort by the city to recruit, hire and train new, police officers.

The police budget has 193 positions of which 21 officer positions are currently unfilled. Additionally, there are 9 open positions due to military service, disability and light duty, as well as 7 retiring officers. This means 37 possible vacant positions, nearly 20% of the police force, by year's end. The GGG strongly urges the city administration to listen to its concerned citizens and fill the officer vacancies NOW.

Deborah Swain  
President  
Gables Good Government Committee  
Coral Gables

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***Is there another Assisted Living Facility  
coming to The Gables?  
We'll keep you informed!***

#### HOW TO JOIN GGG

Send a letter to: Gables Good Government  
1825 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Box #448  
Coral Gables, FL 33134 or  
Email: [GablesGoodGov@Gmail.Com](mailto:GablesGoodGov@Gmail.Com)

#### ANNUAL DUES LEVELS

\$50 Individual / \$75 Household  
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## North Ponce: Then & Now...About the Same!



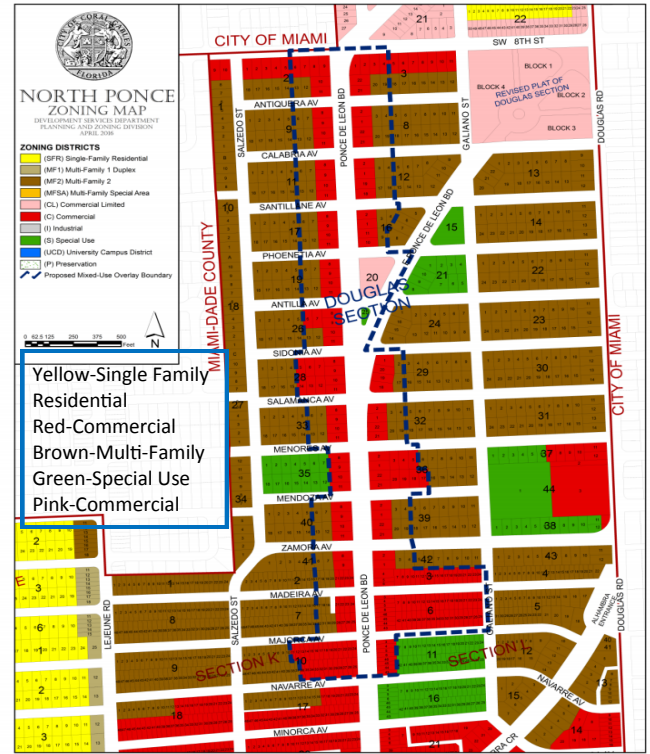
GEORGE MERRICK'S VISION  
LA PUERTA DEL SOL ~ DOUGLAS ENTRANCE

This dramatic entryway stirs a vision of exotic “Old World” history and romance...a dream of far away places brought to our very city. We can imagine walking through this grand portal into an environment of classic architecture, built to a comfortable “human scale”, wide sidewalks, trees casting shade and fragrance into the balmy air, lawns and gardens tended with care to set off each dwelling place as jewels in the landscape...Wait a minute, isn't this North Ponce in Coral Gables?

Narrow, broken sidewalks, exposed garbage containers, visible satellite dishes, unkempt landscapes, parked cars dominating the streetscape, some under open “car ports” of multi-story apartment/condo buildings of no particular style or grace, some parked on asphalt patches obscuring the fronts of non-descript dwelling places...this is definitely not a dream.

However, let it not be said that North Ponce is a complete disaster. There are some lovely one story garden apartments, some meticulously manicured lawns, a substantial inventory of historically designated properties and probably many more that qualify for designation. There is evidence of some restoration work being done. On a quiet weekend residents were seen washing cars, walking dogs, strolling back from the nearby shopping area, others just standing outside talking on cell phones. This is clearly an area ripe with potential for building community and neighborhood spirit in a village-like setting.

City records show that, at least since **2001**, conversations have been taking place among City Commissioners, City Staff, consultants and residents of this area. There was The Charrette in **2002**, in **2003** a TriBoard (Economic Development Board, Historic Preservation Board and Planning and Zoning Board) was



Proposed Boundary Map of North Ponce Mixed-Use District Overlay



convened as, “...City Staff is seeking guidance and direction from the Triboard members in order to draft specific proposals for future recommendations and possible changes to the Comprehensive Land Use Plan and Zoning Code.” In **2004**: Siemon and Larsen, Land Use Planners and Attorneys, consultants to the City make a presentation to the City Commission on *Strategies for Redevelopment* related to the North Ponce District. January **2006**, there is a presentation of the North Ponce Neighborhood *Strategies for Redevelopment* by Planning Department. “The report is also scheduled for City Commission presentation on Tuesday, January 24, **2006**. This will allow interested parties an additional opportunity to provide input and allow Staff to secure valuable City Commission policy direction, Planning and Zoning board policy direction and public input.”

Then, **some ten years later**, on May 5, **2016** the North Ponce Community Planning Workshop was held with a focus on **bringing positive change to the district**. However, the many hours put in by Staff, City Commissioner, members of various boards, consultants and the public, over more than a decade, have resulted in little or no major changes in the district known as North Ponce.

Why not?

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In order to find an answer to the question of “Why not” as it relates to the North Ponce district, the editor of this newsletter asked former Mayor Don Slesnick, who was in office at the time of the monumental activity known as *The Charrette* (2002), to make a few

comments addressing the stalemate in which the North Ponce district now finds itself.

“As I see it, the future re-development of the so-called “North Ponce” district is a complicated matter. The land north of Zamora Avenue, east of Salzedo Street, west of Douglas Road and south of the Tamiami Trail is very valuable property. Thus, most developers who might be interested in building in that area would prefer to amass larger tracts and construct massive projects. On the other hand, Coral Gables citizens and planners have historically preferred to keep the region as a lower intensity multi-family housing area, a place where moderate income individuals and families can afford to live. The City has sponsored several studies of “North Ponce” - all of which arrived at interesting and dynamic recommendations for future zoning, infrastructure and community enhancements. Little has been done (except along the Ponce de Leon Boulevard corridor where larger and higher buildings are allowed) to bring life to the various visionary proposals. This impasse is due to the reality that (1) there is a need for an infusion of public and private funds and (2) there are many small, multi-family buildings controlled by a large, diverse group of land owners who have yet to agree on or participate in a master plan for the area.”

To review the results of *The Charrette*, please go to the link below:

<http://coralgables.com/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=7338>

## Adult Activity Center...not quite ready. Due to open in June 2016



Photos taken June 1, 2016



### "Green Gables" Charging Stations Installed

Located behind City Hall, the two new charging stations stand ready to serve the fleet of 20 newly purchased electric cars the City will use to provide services to the residents of The City Beautiful.



The GGG Newsletter is not a publication of the City of Coral Gables. No public funds were expended for this document. It may contain errors and/or omissions.